

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2140

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, NU

SUBJECT: VISIT TO US OF ALFONSO ROBELO

SUMMARY: DURING MAY 8 MEETING WITH AMB, ING. ALFONSO ROBELO, LEADER OF A NEW OPPOSITION MOVEMENT EXPLAINED HIS VIEWS ON OPPOSITION TACTICS, EXPRESSED CONCERN ON AMCIT "MERCENARIES" ISSUE, INFORMED OF FORMATION OF NEW ANTI-SOMOZA GROUPS IN U.S., AND ADVISED HE WOULD BE VISITING WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK THE WEEK OF MAY 15. EMB RECOMMENDS DEP ASST SECTY SHELTON MEET WITH ROBELO. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER AND WHEN APPOINTMENT POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY

1. THE FOUNDER OF THE NEWLY FORMED NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT, ING. ALFONSO ROBELO DESCRIBED TO AMB AND POLOFF ON MAY 8 THE SUCCESS HIS MOVEMENT WAS HAVING IN RECRUITING MEMBERSHIP FROM MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASS PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES. HE ACKNOWLEDGED AN IMAGE PROBLEM IN THE MDN'S ATTRACTION TO POORER PEOPLE AND STUDENTS BECAUSE OF THE BUSINESS BACKGROUND OF THE FOUNDERS. HE SAID THERE WAS GREATER SUCCESS OUTSIDE MANAGUA WHERE MDN SUPPORTERS HAD MORE INFLUENCE WITH POOR PEOPLE.

2. ROBELO SAID ANTI-SOMOZA SENTIMENT OF MANY PEOPLE LED THEM TO SUPPORT VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH GON RATHER THAN THE MDN'S PASSIVE RESISTANCE LINE SIMILAR TO GHANDI'S TACTICS. HE BELIEVES ONLY ARCHBISHOP OBANDO Y BRAVO CAN LEAD A MOVEMENT TOWARD DIALOGUE. HE OPINED THAT THE MDN, UDEL, THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION PCN, THE "AUTH-
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ENTIC" CONSERVATIVES, AND A POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE WOMEN IN AMPRONAC MIGHT BE ABLE TO FOLLOW SUCH A LEAD.

3. FOR A DIALOGUE TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF POPULAR ACCEPTANCE, THERE WOULD HAVE TO RESULT SOME AGREEMENT FOR LIMITING SOMOZA'S TERM. ROBELO ECHOED THE OPPOSITION VIEWPOINT THAT A CHANGE IN THE U.S. PRESIDEENCY COULD RESULT IN NEW LIFE FOR THE SOMOZA REGIME. TO

AVOID THIS POSSIBILITY AND TO AVOID HAVING SOMOZA PRESIDE OVER THE 1981 ELECTIONS IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO HAVE SOMOZA AGREE TO AN ACCELERATED DEPARTURE FROM POWER. ASKED HIS VIEWS OF THE POSSIBILITY FOR ACHIEVING THIS GOAL, THE AMB SAID HE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE THE MOST DIFFICULT POINT BUT THAT THE OPPOSITION SHOULD PRESENT ITS POSITION TO SOMOZA.

4. ROBELO ADVISED HE WOULD BE TRAVELLING TO WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK FOR MEETINGS WITH NEW GROUPS CALLED THE SOCIETY FOR DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA WHICH THE MDN WAS SPONSORING. HE REFERRED TO MEETINGS WITH PEOPLE FROM FREEDOM HOUSE AND THE CENTER FOR INTER AMERICAN RELATIONS. AMB SUGGESTED HE MEET WITH DEP ASST SECY SHELTON TO EXCHANGE VIEWPOINTS. ROBELO AGREED THAT IF CONVENIENT APPOINTMENT COULD BE ARRANGED HE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE.

5. ROBELO ADVISED THAT THE MDN WAS BEING RUN IN COLLEGIATE FORM BY SEVEN PEOPLE SO THERE IS NO SINGLE LEADER. HE REFERRED TO THIS AS A NEW DEPARTURE FOR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NICARAGUA. HE ALSO SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE MDN HAD RECEIVED IMPLIED THREATS BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD CONSIDERED THE MDN SUBVERSIVE AND IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO BEHEAD (DESCABEZAR) THE MOVEMENT. ROBELO SAID HE DIDN'T PERSONALLY FEEL THREATENED BUT WANTED US TO KNOW.

6. ROBELO REFERRED TO THE "MERCENARY" ISSUE AND URGED THAT WE PUT OUT A STATEMENT DISASSOCIATING THE USG FROM THEM AND THEIR ACTIONS.
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POLOFF REMINDED ROBELO WE HAD ALREADY DONE SO, AND AMB ADVISED ROBELO THE "MERCENARY" ISSUE WAS AN AREA OF PREOCCUPATION FOR WHICH WE WERE TRYING TO FIND A SOLUTION.

7. COMMENT: ROBELO'S COMMENTS FURTHER DOCUMENT THE PRIVATE ONGOING THINKING AMONG RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION LEADERS ABOUT JOINING A DIALOGUE MOVEMENT. DESPITE PUBLIC POSITIONS OF INTRANSIGENCE ON THIS ISSUE, THEY APPEAR TO BE SERIOUSLY TRYING TO FIND A FORMULA TO PROTECT THEMSELVES WHEN AND IF THEY CHANGE THEIR POSITION.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER AND WHEN A SHELTON-ROBELO MEETING WOULD BE POSSIBLE.
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